الظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ

the Inner & the Outer

notes for a talk given at the ʾIslāmic Study Center

by

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وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ

wa-la-dẖikru-llāhi ʾakbar

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!
(Sūrah al-Añkabūt 29:45)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ
[٥٧:٣]

"He is the First, the Last, the Manifest, the Hidden"
(57:3)

"I was a Prophet while Adam عليه السلام was still between clay and water." [i.e. in the process of being created]

[Ḥadīṯẖ transmitted by at-Tirmidẖi, al-Bayhaqī, Aḥmad, al-Ḥakim and adẖ-Dẖahabi who declared it to be *ṣaḥīḥ*.

The Prophet, ﷺ said: "I was a Prophet while Adam was still between the spirit and the body." at-Tirmidẖi narrated it and declared it *ḥasan* (حَسَن), *ṣaḥīḥ* (صحيح), and it is authenticated by al-Ḥākim 2:609 as *ṣaḥīḥ*, and also narrated by the *muḥadītẖ* ʿIbn Abi Sẖayba in his *Musannaf* 14:292, and al-Bukẖarī in his *Tarikẖ* 7:374.

ʿImām Tāj ad-Dīn Subkī said: "It has been said that Allāh سبحانه وتعالى created the spirits before the bodies, and the reference of the Prophet ﷺ to his prophecy in the hadith, "I was a Prophet while Adam عليه السلام was still between the spirit and the body" may be a reference to his blessed spirit and to the Reality of Realities (*ḥaqiqat al-ḥaqāʾiq*). Our minds fall short of knowing such a Reality, but its Creator knows it, and also those to whom He extends a *madad* of light from Him (*man amaddahu bi nūrin ʾilahi*). Allāh سبحانه وتعالى brings to existence which ever of these realities that He likes in the time that He pleases. As for the reality of the Prophet ﷺ, it is most likely that it was before the creation of Adam عليه السلام, and Allāh سبحانه وتعالى gave it its prophetic attribute upon its creation; therefore already at that time, he was the Prophet." (Quoted by Suyuti in *Hawi li al-Fatawi*, and by Qastallani at the beginning of his *Mawahib al-laduniyya* 1:31-32.)

In this regard, Zādẖān reported on the authority of Salmān al-Fārisī رضي الله عنه who said: "I heard my Beloved, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say, 'I and ʿAli were a Light in the presence (lit. between the two Hands of…) of Allāh, سبحانه وتعالى, 14,000 (fourteen thousand) years before the creation of Adam عليه السلام. When Allah سبحانه وتعالى created Adam عليه السلام, He divided that Light into two parts, one part is me and the other is ʿAlī.'"

It was reported by Aḥmad ibn Hanbal in *Fadāʾil as-Ṣaḥāba* as well as Ibn Sḫīrawayhi ad-Daylamī in his *Firdaws al-Akhbār* and Ibn al-Magḫāzilī in his *Kitāb al-Manāqib* with their respective *ʾasānīds*.

1. Hakim al-Ummah Mawlana Tḫanvī ﷺ says in the book, *Tasḫar al-Ṭib* p.5, mentioned above, that in this instance Nūr-i-Muḥammadi means Rūḥ-i-Muḥammadi.

ظاہراً نور محمدی روحِ محمدی سے عبارت ہے

2. Mullah ᶜAlī Qarī ﷺ writes:

"The Prophet ﷺ has mentioned that the first thing Allāh ﷻ created was my Nūr, and in another narration it says Ruḥ, and the meaning of both is the same because Rūḥ is something *nūri* [Nūr], so it means that Allāh ﷻ created my soul before all other souls." [*Mirqāt*, I:167]

قوله اول ما خلق اللّٰه نورى فى رواية روحى ومعنا هما واحد فان الارواح نورانية اى اول ما خلق اللّٰه من الارواح روحى

So here Mullah ᶜAlī Qarī ﷺ equates Nūr with Rūḥ and then he mentions that from all the souls that Allāh ﷻ created, Rūḥ-i-Muḥammadi was the first.

3. ᶜAllamah Aḥmad bin Khafajī ﷺ writes:

"In Truth, Allāh ﷻ created the soul of the Holy Prophet ﷺ before all other souls, and then gave it the status [honor] of Nubuwwat, and this is the meaning of the statement of the Prophet ﷺ that 'Allāh ﷻ created my Nūr before the creation of Sayiddina Adam ﷺ'. [*Nasīm al-Raidh*, II:200]

ان اللّٰه خلق روحه قبل سائر الارواح وخلع عليها خلعة التشريف بالنبوة... وهذا هوالمراد بقوله صلى اللّٰه عليه وسلم ان اللّٰه خلق نوره قبل ان يخلق آدم عليه الصلواة والسلام

4. Sẖaykẖ ᶜAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani (عبد القادر گیلانی) ﷺ mentioned:

"Know that since Allāh ﷻ first created the soul of Muḥammad ﷺ from the light of His Beauty, as He said: "I created Muḥammad from the light of My Face, and as the Prophet said: The first thing Allāh created is my soul, and the first thing Allāh created is the Pen, and the first thing Allāh created is the intellect — what is meant by all this is one and the same thing, and that is the Muḥammadan Truth (*ḥaqiqa muḥammadiyya*)..." [*Sirr al-Asrar* ,p.12-14]

5. Imam Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlwi ﷺ writes:

"First thing created in the *ᶜalim al-ʾarwah* [world of souls] was the Holy Prophet ﷺ." [*Tafsir al-Azīzi*, Juz 30 p.219]

ودر عالم ارواح اول کسے که پیدا شدایشان بوند

So even Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dehlwi equates the first creation to Rūḥ-i-Muḥammadi.

In fact, in some of the narrations, instead of the word Nūr, Rūḥ is used. So we can see that Rūḥ and Nūr is same thing. So some when scholars used the word Nūr, they meant Rūḥ.

6. ʾImām Bayhaqi ﷺ gave a different explaination saying:

"And what is meant by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ saying: "I was written [in Umm Al-Kitab] in the Presence of Allāh ﷻ as the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ, while Adam ﷺ was still kneaded in his clay" is that he was destined and decreed by Allāh ﷻ even before the father of Man and the first of all the Messengers ﷺ [Dalīl Al-Nubuwah, 1:81]

7. Also what is meant by the statment that Allāh ﷻ created everything else from the Nūr-i-Muḥammadi?

Mullah ᶜAlī Qarī ﷺ writes: "And all other souls were created from the *barakah* [blessing] of his ﷺ blessed body and soul." [Sharah al-Shifa, I:17]

وسائر الارواح انما خلق ببركة روحه ونور وجوده

8. There are scholars who have mentioned that the first thing Allāh ﷻ created was the Qalam (pen/قلم). Hafidẖ ibn Hajar mentions that the first thing Allāh ﷻ created was the Qalam. [Mawduat-e-Kabir, p.31]

والوارد فی اول ما خلق اللّٰہ حدیث اول ما خلق اللّٰہ القلم وھو ثبت

9. Allamah Sayyidd Sulaymain Nadwi ؒ writes in *Sirat al-Nabi* III:76 that the very first thing Allāh ﷻ created was the Qalam and then ordred it to write, [Abu Dawud, II:290] [Tirmidhi, II:167] [*al-Bidaya wa-l-Nihaya*, I:8]

ان اول ما خلق اللّٰہ القلم فقال له اکتب

Further to my earlier reference concerning the Nūr of Muḥammad ﷺ, Mawlanā ʾAsẖraf ʿAli Tẖanwī ؒ has mentioned a Hadith in his book نشر الطیب فی ذکر النبی الحبیب صلی الله علیه وسلم with reference of Ahkam bin Al-Qattan, that Sayyidinā ʿAli bin al-Ḥusayn ؑ (Zayn-ul-ʿAbdīn) narrated from his father Sayyidinā al-Ḥusayn ؑ and he narrated from his father Sayyidinā ʿAlī ؑ that the Prophet ﷺ said: "I was a Light (*nūr*) in front of my Lord some forty thousand years before the birth of Sayyidinā Adam ؑ."

There are further traditions which purport to prove that the Nūr of the Prophet ﷺ was created in the earliest time; some traditions even say that his Nūr was created before the Tablet, the Pen, earth, sky and even before all creatures and that, in Truth, all creation, as such, is actually the Nūr of Muḥammad ﷺ.

What then is all this when we know that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ was born on a Monday in the month of Rabiʿa al-ʾAwwal in the the Year of the Elephant which corresponds approximately to 570 AD?

Especially considering that all that we have written on and mentioned in these first few pages was, and is, considered to be ʾaḥaditẖ which all have been fabricated and basically beyond any consideration by ibn Taymiyyah (ابن تیمیة الحراني) and his school.

Though they all accept wouth any doubt or question the fact that the Blessed Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was born on a Monday in the month of Rabiᶜa al-ᵓAwwal in the the Year of the Elephant which corresponds approximately to 570 AD.

In a nutshell, that is, if not the whole story, a large part of the story of the status in the world of created things (though of course not in the World of the Absolute where al-Ḍḫāhir and al-Bāṭin are beyond the realm of doubt or question since Allāh ﷻ had mentioned it of Himself) of the thinking or speculation revolving around the ḍḫāhir and the bāṭin and, as such, this is the topic of this talk or essay.

Sḫaykḫ-al-ᵓIslām Farid-ud-din Ganj-i-Sḫakr ﷺ once said, “If you cannot find spiritual men then busy yourselves studying their lives and reading their works.”

And it is for this reason that we gather at such functions and busy ourselves in studying the lives of such spiritually enlightened men in order to love them and gain nearness to Allāh ﷻ by loving them. If we cannot actually find such spiritually enlightened men then we should seek to study their example and inculcate it into our lives.

Muslims today, although many in number, are being persecuted, killed, imprisoned and oppressed almost everywhere throughout the world. Although we number over a billion men and women, our brothers and sisters are slaughtered daily in Palestine, in Gaza, in Chechnya, in Daghestan, in Sinkiang, in the Phillipines, in Kashmir, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan, in Iran, in Iraq, in Darfur, in Somalia, in Yemen and most of us can can do nothing but watch and pray.

Yet in the beginning, when the Muslims were few in number, we were able to gain victory over our enemies and overcome the empires of that time. One of the reasons that we are in such a predicament today is our lack of spirituality. Our righteous predecessors (*salaf*) were people not only of outer knowledge but also of insight who were trained by true *ᶜarif bi-llāh* ﷺ who not only groomed them outwardly but also perfected their inner states.

That is where we have fallen short. We, with our PhD's and our academic training, assume that because we know the outer aspects, and some of us who have read and gathered a few books – those we sometimes call the shopping bag *fuqaha* – think that we have mastered our religion (*dīn*) and can gain nearness to Allāh ﷻ without the help of the ʾawliyā karām ؒ and ultimately, and all too commonly, without the help of the Best of Creation, the Prophet ﷺ.

A man once asked the sage Bayāzid al Bistāmi ؒ to show him the shortest way to reach Allāh ﷻ, to which Bayāzid al Bistāmi ؒ replied "Love those who are loved by Allāh ﷻ and make yourself lovable to them so that they may come to love you. Allāh ﷻ looks seventy times each day into the hearts of those whom he loves — perchance he may find your name in the heart of one such beloved — then he may come to love you and forgive you your wrong doings!"

There is a well known saying, *"al-ᶜalim yunaqisḫu wa al ᶜarif yusaqqi*" (The Scholar makes the design and the Knower perfects it). A learned man teaches a student the methods of worship and a mystic guides him to perfect it. So we can see that ʾIslām is in need of such people and we are dependent on them for our well being. One of the reasons why ʾIslām is so dead today is because we have moved away from tradition and spiritual ʾIslām, and instead, turned spiritually bankrupting our dīn and turning it into mere rituals. Our bodies may be obedient but our hearts have become deviant. The traditions that our forefathers have always defended are now being labeled as innovations and practices that were given to us by non Muslims. When we go to the *mazārs* and *maqamāt* we are condemned as grave worshipers and illiterate people who go to dead people to gain nearness to Allāh ﷻ. When we call upon the al-Quṭb al-Gḫawtḫ ؒ or upon our sḫayukḫ or pirs or murshids for assistance then we are told that it is *sḫirk* (شـــرك) If we have to ex-amine this accusation, and if we were to defend these practices then we need to find ample proof of the permissibility of calling on the ʾawliyah karam ؒ for assistance. In the process we would also find that by virtue of such practices ʾIslām flourished and expanded.

We must remember that ʾIslām *requires* taṣawwuf (تصوّف). The reason being that the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ which we are bound to follow, is not only made up of his words and actions but also consists of his qualities such as *taqwa*, *ʾikḫlās*, *tawakkul*, humility, etc. So let us contune to call upon al-Quṭb al-Gḫawtḫ رضي الله عنه and to call on the many ʾawliyah karam رضي الله عنهم using them as a *wasilah* to gain nearness to Allāh ﷻ, and let us continue to return to the beloveds of Allāh ﷻ who are the true servants and lovers of Allāh ﷻ, whose hearts contain nothing but Allāh ﷻ, as stated in the ḥadīṯḫ sḫarīf, "No place in the earth or in the skies can contain Me but the heart of the *muʾmin*." Or in ḥaditḫ al-qudsī, "The God-conscious (*al-mutaqqiᶜūn*) are always restless and eager to meet Me and in fact, I am more eager to meet them!" and as Allah ﷻ makes clear:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَٰكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ

wa lā taqūlū li-mañy-yuqttalu fī sabīli-llāh amwāt
bal ʾaḥyaʾuñw-wa lakil-lā tasḫᶜurūn

don't say those who have died in the Way of Allāh are dead:
they are living only you don't understand how. (2:154)

Calling to the Bāṭin by the Ḍḫāhir

ʾImām al-Hafidḫ al-Bayhaqi said: "Some of our companions used as a proof to refute the idea of place to Allah ﷻ the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: 'You are aḍh-Ḍḫahir and there is nothing above You, and You are al-Bāṭin and there is nothing below You.' So, if there is nothing above Him and nothing below Him, He is not in a place." Allāh ﷻ is The One above Whom nothing exists and underneath Whom nothing exists; hence He exists without a place. His Existence is obvious by proofs. He is clear of the delusions of bodily attributes.

And similarly in the *Ṣaḥih* of Muslim: "O Allāh ﷻ, You are the First: there is nothing before You; and You are the Last: there is nothing after You. You are the Manifest: there is nothing above You. You are the Hidden, the Unseen: there is nothing below You."

All such sayings make it very difficult for the average person to understand where or what Allāh ﷻ really is or is not, especially in the light of aḥadīṯḫ which we have mentioned concerning Allāh ﷻ being in the heart of the believer or Allāh ﷻ coming running to the one who takes a step toward Him or even such ʾayat as:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

huwa-l-ladḫī kḫalaqa-s-samāwāti wa-l-ʾarḍa fī sittati ʾayyāmin
tḫumma-s-tawaa ʿala-l-ʿarsḫ

"It is He Who has created the heavens and the earth in six stages
[and] then assumed the Seat of Absolute Authority,"

though very often one finds this translated as:

"It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in Six Days,
and is firmly seated on the Throne

or consider these words in the same ʾāyat:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ

wa huwa maʿakum ʾayna mā kuñtum
He is with you where ever you are
(57:4)

The first part of the ʾāyat gives the idea, in English translation, that Allāh ﷻ is some *where*, and moreover that He has a body and is *seated* some where in differentiation to no where or one place or another, in spite of the ʾāyat which says, "He is not like any *thing*".

هُوَ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

laysa kamitḫlihi sḫayʾun
He is not like any thing.
(42:11)

Not to mention the confusion that naturally arises in the minds of people as to what exactly the "ʿarsh" is — some kind of worldly throne tricked out in red velvet with jewels — when in reality in the *lisan al-ʿarab* the *ʿarsḫ* is a little green *wikkiup* similar to that used by the American Indians where the village sḫaykḫ decides who and when people get to water their sheep or get their drinking water.

No doubt the assignment of water rights to a people *is* a matter of life and death and no doubt such a seat can be construed to be the "Seat of Absolute Authority" so far as the people who are waiting to get water for themselves or their animals are concerned and no doubt as ʾIslām spread and encountered the realms of Byzantium and Persia such a seat came to be understood as a worldly throne no doubt replete with gold and silver and velvet and jewels etc. but...

What we are really trying to get to here is: how did the Prophet ﷺ get the people of His time (and by extension all time) to understand that hidden in the solid world of appearences there is another world all around them which was for most eyes...unseen, hidden or *bāṭin.*

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ۚ

wa li-llāhi-l-masẖriqu wa-l-magẖrib
fa-ʾaynama tuwallū fa-tẖumma wajåhu-llāh

and to Allāh [belongs both] the East and the West
and it what ever direction you turn there is the Presence of Allāh.
(2:115)

So here were these people; the herders of sheep, goats and camels – the nomadic followers of caravans and sedentary pilgrimage town traders, who had fallen from the pure knowledge and belief in the Unicity and Ipseity of Allāh ﷻ into idolatry and polytheism.

He ﷻ calls to the Inner by the Outer:

وَآيَةٌ لَهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ أَحْيَيْنَاهَا

wa ʾāāyatul-lahumu-l-ʾarḍū-l-maytatu — ʾaḥyaynāhā
and a sign to them is the earth that is dead — We give her life...
(36:33)

Imagine the task before the Prophet ﷺ faced with such people who somewhere or sometime in an almost fogotten past had been the children of the first true people to inhabit the planet, the ur- prophet Adam ﷺ and his wife ﷺ fallen from grace, fallen from the garden, fallen to earth — but who knew and were taught the Truth.

Living now under the heaven sent black tent – the *bayt al-atiq* (الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ) the ancient house in the valley of Bakkah, which means, 'it brings *Buka*' (crying, weeping) to the tyrants and arrogant, meaning they cry and become humble in its vicinity. Bakkah or Makkah or *Umm Raḥm* (Mother of Mercy) or *Umm ul-Qura* (Mother of Viilages) which was, flooded out in the time of Nuḥ ﷺ leaving only the faintest form of the foundation, the foundations upon which our grandfather ʾIbraḥīm ﷺ and ʾIsmaʿil ﷺ raised once again on those ancient stones the al-Bait al-Ma'mur (الْبَيْتِ الْمَعْمُورِ) for the worship of the One True Being ﷻ who has created all this is was and ever will be and yet they had fallen again, fallen into idolatry, into animism, into sḫirk and the lowest forms of obdurate insolent arrogant ignorance and ultimate denial (*kufr*) of all that is truly True.

How would it be, how could he ﷺ awaken in the walking dead the remembrance of what was truly Alive?

How to reach the dead that breathe — return them to their beginnings— restore their birth right — return their heritage?

How do those who have lost their belief and don't even believe in belief come again to belief and through belief to life?

How to get beneath the carapace of the dunya, roll the stone from the door, call forth the living from the dead?

and he ﷺ called to the unseen by the seen

To understand the miracle of the Prophet ﷺ go back and read the early Makkan surahs, where fresh from the Cave of Hira on the Mountain of Light he spoke to the people the words that the Angel ﷺ conveyed — and his tongue did not lie nor did his heart waver.

إِنَّهُ عَلَى رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ • يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ
• فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ • وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ
وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ • إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ •
وَمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ •

īnnahū ᶜalā rajåᶜihi la-qadir • yowma tubåla-s-sarāāᵓir (u)
fa mā lahū min quwwatiñ wa lā nāṣir • wa-s-samāᵓi dḫati-r-rajᶜi
-wa-l-ᵓarḍi dḫāti-ṣ-ṣadiᶜ(i) – ᵓinnahu laqawlun fasl (uñw)–
wa ma huwa bi-l-hazl •

Truly He is able to bring him back to life on the Day when all secrets shall be laid bare and he shall have neither strength nor helper. By the heaven and the recurrent rains – by the earth bursting forth [with green growth] truly it is a decisive Word — no idle tale. (86:8-14)

he ﷺ shall call to the hidden by the revealed

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى – وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى•
بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا • وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى•
إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى – صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى•

qadᵓaflaḥa man tazakkā – wa dḫakara-s-ma rabbika fa-ṣalla•
bal tūṯḫirūna-l-ḥayāta-d-dunyā • wa-l-ᵓakḫiratu kḫayrun wa-ᵓabåqā
ᵓinna hadḫa lafī-ṣ-ṣuhufu-l-ᵓula – ṣuḥufi ᵓibårāḥīma wa mūsā

Succcesful [is the one] who purifies [his soul] – and remembering the Name of his Lord – worships. But no – you prefer the life of this world – while the Final World is better and more enduring. Truly [all of this has been revealed] in the earlier scrolls [of Divine Revelation]; the scrolls of ᵓIbårāhīm and Mūsā. (87:14-19)

اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ • الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ•
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ•

ᵓiqårᵓa wa rabbuka-l-ᵓakram • ᵓalladḫi ᶜallam bi-l-qalam •
ᶜallam-l-ᵓinsāna mā lam yaᶜalm •

Read and your Lord is Most Generous • Who taught by the Pen • taught the humans what they knew not (96:3-5)

The fine — unvarying Axis
That regulates the Wheel —
Though Spokes — spin — more conspicuous
And fling a dust — the while.

The Inner — paints the Outer —
The Brush without the Hand —
Its Picture publishes — precise —
As is the inner Brand —
(from a poem by Emily Dickinson)

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

huwa-l-ladẖi kẖalaqakum min nafsin waḥidatiñw-
wa jaᶜala minhā zowjahā li-yaskuna ilayha

“It is He who created you from a single soul,
and from that made its mate so that he might find repose in her.”
(7:189)

and so it is like that — two things but from one—the inner and the outer — the he and she — the she and the he — but in the end neither hidden nor revealed but both hidden and revealed — people strugging to understand what can never really be understood.

How do you understand what you can’t see?

Like talking to the baby in the womb and trying to tell that baby about the world – about the blue skies – about the green trees – about the beautiful colored flowers – the pink roses – the red cherries – the golden chrysanthemums – the purple iris – how would the baby know even if you could speak with it – even if it could somehow understand your words – how would the baby know what it has no means of knowing – knowing only the world of the womb – the flowing blood – the pulsating heart.

So Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ through the lips of the Angel ﷺ seek to explain to us that there is not just that which we can see –

that which we can feel – not just that which we readily sense or parse or conjugate or mulitply, add, subtract or divide but there is, in All Truth, something else all around us but Unseen.

The Prophet ﷺ once told the companions, “Stretch out your hands in front of you – turn then over – move them left – move them right – wherever you move them you touching an angel ﷺ.”

But who among us really sees the angels ﷺ that are everywhere?

Who among us sees that which cannot be seen and how can we see what cannot be seen? And this was at least part of the assingment of the Prophet ﷺ in getting the *kafirūn*, *musḫrikūn* and *munafiqūn* to see what could not be seen so that in seeing what could not be seen they could somehow learn or understand that that there is more to everything than what they thought or didn’t think, could imagine or contemplate or, in the end come to believe in.

How would people who didn’t believe in the Unseen ever come to sense that Allāh ﷻ was real and that, in the end everyone would stand in front of Allāh ﷻ with all their deeds of ommission or comission before them to be ultimately judged and to spend a time longer than anyone could or can imagine in pain or bliss according to what they had or had not done in this world of the clearly Seen.

This world of the ḍḫāhir which was clear for all to see.

Yes the people of his city believed him to be good and honest — naming him al-ʾAmīn becuase he was totally veracious and always spoke the truth but, even though they were willing for him to be their leader, they couldn’t *see* and recognize he was the Prophet ﷺ.

His kin folk among the great princes of the Quraysḫ of Makkah offered him ﷺ a deal saying; “Oh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdu-l-Muṭallib al-Hasḫim, if your ambition is to possess wealth, we will get for you as much as you wish; if your aspiration is to win honor and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the finest maiden of your own choice.”

To which he ﷺ replied, “I am neither desirous of riches, ambitious of dignity nor do I seek dominion. I am sent by Allāh ﷻ, who has ordained me to announce the good news of ʾIslām to you. I give you the words of my Lord; I admonish you. If you accept the message I bring you, Allāh ﷻ will be favorable to you both in this world and in the next. If you reject my admonitions, I shall be patient, and leave it to Allāh ﷻ to judge between you and me.”

He ﷺ further told them that “if you put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left that is as nothing to me” as there was nothing they had to give him whereas he had everything to give them – if they but knew – if they but knew.

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ
إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ مُرْسَلُونَ
قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ

wa-ḍ-ribå lahum-matḫalan ʾaṣḥaba-l-qaryah :
ʾidḫ jāāāʾaha-l-mursalūn •
ʾidḫ ʾarsalnāā ʾilayhimu-tḫ-tḫnayni fa-kadḫdḫabū-humma fa-
ᶜazzaznā bi-tḫalithiñ fa-qalūū ʾinnāā ʾilaykum-mursalūn •
qālū māā ʾañtum ʾilla basḫarum-mitḫluna wa māā ʾanzalna-r-
raḥmānu min sḫayʾin ʾin ʾañtum īllā takdḫibūn.

“And set forth an example of the poeple of a village when there came to them the messengers. When we sent to them two (Mūsā and ʾIsa ﷺ) they rejected them both so We strengthened [them] with a third and they said, “We have been sent to you as messengers.” [The villagers] said. “You are only mortals like us, and the Merciful has not sent down anything. You are lying.” (36:13-15)

وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ
اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ
وَمَا لِيَ لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

أَأَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً
إِنْ يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَنُ بِضُرٍّ لَا تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ
إِنِّي إِذًا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
إِنِّي آمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ
قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ ۖ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ
بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ
بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

wa jāāᵓa min ᵓaqåsa-l-madīnati rajuluñy-yasᶜā
qāla yā qowmi-t-tabiᶜu-l-mursalīn (a)
ᵓit-tabiᶜū ma-l-lā yasᵓalukum ᵓajårañ-wa hum-muhtadūn •
wa ma liya lāā ᵓaᶜbudu-l-ladḫī fataranī wa ᵓilayhi turjaᶜūn? •
ᵓaᵓattakḫidḫu miñ dūnihīī ᵓālihatan
ᵓiñy-yuridåni-r-raḥmanu bi ḍurril-
la tugḫni ᶜanni sḫafaᶜatuhum sḫayañw-wa la yuñqidḫūn •
ᵓinnīī ᵓidḫal-lafī ḍalālim-mubīn •
ᵓinnīī āamañtu bi-rabbikum fa-s-smaᶜūn •
qīla-då-kḫuli-l-jannah ; qāla yālayta qowmi yaᶜlamūn (a)
bimā gḫafara lī-rabbi wa jaᶜalanī mina-l-mukramin. •

And there came from the farthest ends of the city a man running, saying, “Oh my people! Follow the messengers – follow those who do not ask any reward from you and who are rightly guided.

“And why should I not serve the One Who made me and to Whom you shall [all] be returned? Shall I take other gods apart from Him? If the Merciful wills that harm should befall me, their intercession would not help me nor could they save me. Truly then, I would be clearly lost in error. Truly I have believed in your Lord, so hear me!” He was told, “Enter the Garden!” He said, “Would that my people knew — how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored.” (36:20-26)

Would that my people knew!

So how do people know? Or rather, “How or even why do some people know and not others? In one instance the people of the “town” which is to say Makkah or, by extension, the world. say: “You are only mortals like us, and the Merciful has not sent down anything. You are lying.” and in the other instance the man who comes running from the furthest reaches of the village, the city, the world, says, “And why should I not serve the One Who made me and to Whom you shall [all] be returned? Shall I take other gods apart from Him? If the Merciful wills that harm should befall me, their intercession would not help me nor could they save me. Truly then, I would be clearly lost in error. Truly I have believed in your Lord, so hear me!”

How is that some people can “see”, or can “know”, and other people are, as Allāh ﷻ says,

صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ

ṣummuñ bukmuñ ᶜumyun fa-hum lā yarjīᶜūn
Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return [to the Truth].
(2:17)

and again:

صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

ṣummuñ bukmuñ ᶜumyun fa-hum lā yaᶜqilūn
Deaf, dumb, and blind, they do not comprehend.
(2:171)

How come when you tell some people, “Look, this world is not the end of the worlds, there are not only worlds beyond this world but there is a World that is beyond all the worlds,” they take you to be in need of psychiatric help or, if nothing else, delusional.

This is what the Prophet ﷺ faced and, in truth, this is what all those who call to the Way of Allāh ﷻ face in their attempts to make people who are blind to see, to cause those who are dumb to speak, and to open the eyes of the blind to what is all around them.

"Where," they ask "is this Unseen?" "Where is this World that is beyond this world?" "Where are these angels that if you put your hand out you can touch. Show them to me. Where is this Unseen and why is it unseen and why can't I see it? And how can you talk about such things…madness…delusion…fantasy that is all it is."

"Ah" but you say to them, "it is not madness or delusion or fantasy but it is Truth and not truth with a little 't' but with a capital 'T'.

And yes it can be seen, and yes it can be known but you cannot or will you ever see unless you are illuminated and enlightened.

And they ask, "How is that?" Where do I find that?"

And then you try to tell them about people like al-Suhrawardī ﵀ who said that the complete and perfect witnessing of truth is reached in the state of illumination (*ʾishrāq*) which is the direct irradiation of the soul by the light of another dimension. You explain that the soul itself is a light that has descended from the world of light into the world of darkness and how illumination discloses the truth (*ḥaqq*) immediately and needs no verification (*taṣdiq*) and there you are again, talking to the baby in the womb, who aside from the beat of their mother's heart and the flow of the blood remains "Deaf, dumb, and blind, they do not comprehend."

True knowledge is something established in and of itself: the term "certainty" (*yaqīn*) generally serves to express this fixity. Such certainty can best be understood as "tranquillity" (*ʾitmiʾnan*). The same idea of quietude or tranquillity reached through complete and true knowledge can also be expressed as peace of mind on the basis of the generally accepted notion of the "perfect" (*kāmil*) and "complete" (*tamm*) in its own self-being. The True, by virtue of its completeness, needs nothing external to be accomplished and, consequently, no movement is necessary for it. A state of clear certainty, as opposed to the state of "confusion" (*ḥayrah*) that presupposes a constant restlessness and non-ending dissatisfaction.

Again returning to an early Makkan sūrah – that of the Dawn (*al-Fajr*), the tenth revealed to the Prophet ﷺ, we hear Allāh ﷻ say,

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ
ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً
فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي – وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

yāā ʾayyuha-n-nafsu-l-mutmaʾinnah •
ʾirjiʿīī ʾila rabbika rādiyatam-marḍiyyah •
fa-d-kẖuli fī ʾibādi – wa-då-kẖuli jannatī

Oh you whose self (*nafs*) is tranquil.
return to your Lord pleased and well pleasing.
Enter with My servants – enter My Garden.
(89:22-30)

The Prophet ﷺ once went out when the leaves were falling from the trees. He took hold of a branch and said: "Verily, when a servant of Allah ﷻ prays seeking only His pleasure, his sins fall away just as the leaves have fallen from this tree." (al-Tirmidẖī, ḥadīṯẖ 199)

And just like that…just like that…just like that is illumination.

a leaf falling from a tree.

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

wa huwa maʿakum ayna ma kuñtum ; wa-llāhu bimā taʿmalūna basīr
and He is with you wherever you are ; and Allāh Knows [and] Sees.
(57:4)

Since Allāh ﷻ makes clear to us that He is with us wherever we are and He is, as we mentioned at the beginning of this talk, both the Inner and the Outer (not to mention The First and the Last). This means that the inner and the outer (as well as before and after), seemingly all opposites, are in actuality located inside of us and there is no where we have to go to find them or reconcile them outside of ourselves but that the reconclliation of these seeming polar realities is joined within us and furthermore through *ḥadīṯẖ qudsī* we know that Allāh ﷻ says on the tongue of the Prophet ﷻ.

"Neither My Heavens nor My Earth can contain Me,
but the heart of my servant is a house for Me."

which points us exactly as to where Allāh ﷻ may be found.

in Sūrah Kahf, Allāh ﷻ tells us in speaking of Dḫu-l-Qarnayn ﷺ:

إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا

ʾinnahu makkanna lahu fi-l-ʾarḍi wa ʾātaynāhu kulli sḫayʾin sababā

truly We established his power on earth,
and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends.
(18:84)

The reader or listener may wonder why this ʾāyāt which deals with the Dḫu-l-Qarnayn ﷺ is relevant to this issue of the inner and the outer in the context of illumination as the rectifying principle by which the seeming contradictions between inner and outer are resolved and peace is restored to the soul and, by further extension, how this all relates to the mission of the Prophet ﷺ especially in regards to the difficulties he faced in Makkah.

The key phrase that has to be understood at a very deep level, and which is crucial in realising the "*how*" of belief and the acceptance, in spite of all that surrounds us, that the Unseen is real is found in:

وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا

wa ʾātaynāhu kulli sḫayʾin sababā
and We gave him the ways and the means to all ends.
(18:84)

Now in the Qurʾānic story or *mitḫāl* Allāh ﷻ tells how the Prophet Dḫu-l-Qarnayn ﷺ, the Prophet whose life spanned two centuries (*dḫu-l-qarnayn*) goes first to the far west and then to the far east which is to say he goes to the extremes (inner and outer) and then finally comes to a pass between two mountains or, in other words, the place of inbetween or *barzakḫ* between two extremes (sweet and salt, wet and dry), a place between the inner and the outer, east and west, and found, "a people who barely understood a word" of his.

قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا

qowmun lā yakādūna yafqahūn qowlan
a people who barely understood a word
(18:93)

who were oppressed by two peoples, by two tribes, by two sides, the *Jūj* and the *Maǧūj* (known in English as Gog and Magog) who were corrupting, polluting and in general devastating the land all around.

The people who lived in the space of the pass, which is to say the people who lived betweeen the two worlds, between the two extremes, between the mountains, offered him money if he could somehow help build a wall between them and the corrupters.

He told them he didn't need their money for, after all, Allāh ﷻ had given him "the ways and means to all ends", but he needed their labor, and between their labor or effort and his means they errected a wall that shall last to the end of time; "until the Day [when] We shall cause them to surge like waves over one another and the Trumpet shall be blown and We shall collect them all together."

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمْعًا

wa nufikkḫa fi-ṣ-ṣūri fa-jamaᶜnāhum jamᶜā
(18:99)

فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَاب

fa-ḍuriba baynahu*m* bi-sūril-lahu bābu*m*-
bāṭinuhu fīhi-r-raḥmatu wa ḍḫāhiruhu min qibalihi-l-adḫābå

and a wall shall be set up between them in which is a gate
on the inside of it — mercy — and on the outside of it — suffering.
(57:13)

This is the wall between those who get it and those who don't, for not to get it is to get the suffering even if it appears otherwise. Those who get it live in the Garden and those who don't suffer – terribly – even if they live in a gated community, drive a Lexus, have a trophy wife and make a seven figure salary or live in a *chawl* in Mumbai wear a *lungee*, tee shirt and a par of flip-flops, have dysentery, drink dirty water and use the gutter for a toilet —

Be they king or be they slum dog if they don't get it they live on the other suffering side of the wall — a wall which has a gate that swings two ways — but can only be passed through to the Mercy (*raḥmah*) side a certain kind of effort or work for as Dẖu-l-Qarnayn ﷺ says, "Help me with [the] strength [of your labor] and I will make a barrier between you and them (18:95)

فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا

faʾaʿīnūbī bi-quwwatin ʾajål baynakum wa baynahum radåma

Interestingly enough this story of Dẖu-l-Qarnayn ﷺ comes at the end of Sūrah Kahf which is more well known as the sūrah which contains the story of the seeking of the Truth by Prophet Mūsā ﷺ which he finally finds, but only in a very round about and ultimately challenging way, in the teaching of Sayyidinā Kẖidr (The Ever-green) ﷺ. He teaches Mūsā ﷺ that there is an inner dimension to external events and that such inner dimensions are not always confined by the boundaries of time and space but there are hidden dimensions of external events extending through time and space and also past-future directions in a parallel universe.

But that is, as they say, another story about past and future although it also surely deals with the inner and the outer as well as with the scope and limits of the Prophetic station (*maqam*).

Now in this story of Dẖu-l-Qarnayn ﷺ we are referring to, Allāh ﷻ has placed one of the keys through which we can understand the *means*, noting that Allāh ﷻ says that He has provided Dẖul Qarnyan ﷺ with "the ways and the means to all ends".

We said that tranquillity *may* be reached through complete and true knowledge — tranquillity which can also be understood as peace of mind as opposed to the state of 'confusion' (*ḥayrah*) that pre-supposes a constant restlessness and non-ending dissatisfaction.

And we relate the saying of Allāh in (57:13):

"a wall in which there is a gate on the inside of which is mercy, and on the outside of which is suffering"

We are, in truth, describing the world in which most people live and the world in which the people of Makkah in the time of the Prophet ﷺ existed and had their being for the most part, barring the few *hunafah* and possibly some People of the Book who lived in Makkah and had access to the gate in the wall either thru direct knowing, in the case of the self-realised or *hunafah,* or through prior revelation (*waḥy*/وحي) in the case of the People of the Book.

Again when Allāh ﷻ says that He has provided Dḫul Qarnyan ﷺ with "the ways and the means to all ends" we must ask ourselves what exactly are "the means to all ends".

Here we must go back to the original story that applies to all human souls which Allāh ﷻ relates in His Book. He says,

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ
مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ
وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۛ شَهِدْنَا ۛ
أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَٰذَا غَافِلِينَ

wa ʾidḫa ʾakḫadḫa rabbuka
min banī ādama min ḍḫuhūrihim ḍḫurriyyatahum
wa asḫhadahum ᶜala ʾañfusihim ʾalastu bi rabbikum
qālū bala sḫahidnā
an taqūlū yowma al-qiyamati ʾinna kunna ᶜan hadḫa ghafilīn

And [remember] when your Lord took from the children of Adam – from their loins – from their seed – [all] their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes! Surely we see that is so." [and Allāh ﷻ replied] "this lest you say on the day of Resurrection, 'We didn't know [you were our Lord]." (7:172)

All human beings are heirs to this original trust whereby every soul knew – and deeply knows – "Who" their Lord and Creator was *and* is. There is *no* excuse. Allāh ﷻ said to all souls, "this lest you say on the day of Ressurection, 'We didn't know [you were our Lord]".

So the people of Makkah as well as the people of New York, London, Paris, Moscow, Cairo, Tehran, Delhi or Beijing, black, white, yellow, brown or red, all in Truth know the Truth and have known this from before time began and not only knew the Truth but gave their solemn witness to that Truth. There are simply no excuses nor can there be any; not then, not now, not ever.

But the means — what are the means of knowing that Truth?

The means are simple — in one word — dḫikr or remembrance.

Those who Remember are those who live on one side of the wall where there is mercy and *raḥmah*, for they have surrendered to the original truth which is what the Prophet ﷺ and indeed all the many prophets ﷺ came to remind us human beings of.

And those who profess not to Remember, who are *gḫaflah* – forgetful – they find their place on the *other* side of the wall – the side of suffering, which is the "constant restlessness and non-ending dissatisfaction" that in truth lies at the root of all human sufferring and infects so much and so many in our present day world .

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

fa ʾinna maᶜa-l-ᶜūsri yusra
and surely in difficulty comes ease
(94:05)

Ease is bound up with difficulty. It comes with it. We all know from an outer dimension perspective that ease usually follows the difficulty but is seperated by a time distance. Yet, Allah ﷻ says they come bound together for time in the sense of past, present and future is one and therefore, there is no distance in time between the occurrence of difficulty and ease.

Difficulty is prescribed to be associated with ease so as to afirm the fact that in an outer dimension it will certainly show up, but in time, in the outer dimension model. In a confined space-time we can only perceive the ease when time has passed and so we must travel in time to reach the destination of the ease already written for us.

In a parallel universe the two events occur at the same time, for time is one, as Allāh ﷻ is both first and the last just as Allāh ﷻ is both inner and the outer and the he and the she are but from one soul.

In other words we must come to understand with certainty that behind the external and outer dimension of all events there is a hidden wisdom in an inner dimension, and understand the wisdom that exists behind and within inner events since, in time, they show up in the future as events in the outer dimension.

Allāh ﷻ may choose to give a glimpse of such knowledge of folding (*batuw*) of time-space to some of his servants which leads us back to where we began in the aḥadīṯḫ concerning the reality that Muḥammad ﷺ exists before Adam ﷺ is between clay and water and yet Muḥammad ﷺ at the same time is born on a Monday in Rabiᶜa al-Awwāl in the Year of the Elephant in Makkah. This can only be understood by those who see the inner in the outer and outer in the inner and know the first and last are folded in time.

Just so pain and suffering exist with bliss and tranquillity separated only by a wall in which is a gate which opens in both directions, and to which Allāh ﷻ has thoughtfully provided us with a key and the means to use it if we will but only if we will — the Key of Ḍḫikr.

For that reason (and many others no doubt) Allāh ﷻ reminds us:

وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ

WA LA-ḌḫIKRU-LLĀHI AKBAR

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!
(Sūrah al-Añkabut 29:45)

Often when one reads the teachings of the sḫuyukḫ and the ʾawliya karam ﷻ they end by saying that what they have said is in fact nothing as the subject has neither end nor beginning. So I will take a page from them and say the same. I have tried to shed some light on the subject of the inner and the outer — the *ḍḫāhir* and the *bāṭin* — but in Truth the subject is infinite. Hopefully the listener or the reader has benefitted in some small way and Allāh knows best ﷻ.

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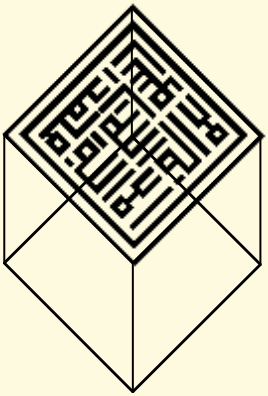

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